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71.2009.085.05686

Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

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THE SHADOW OF A COMING WAR

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When I consider my predecessors in this series I feel honored at being in their company and daunted by the standard they have set. I am further daunted by the subject I ventured to choose, the materials for which are not only widely dispersed but also span nearly a century. Given the time limits on my research and reporting I cannot pretend to wrap it up tonight. Still the topic is so thought-provoking and basic, yet so little focused on by historians, that even these preliminary soundings and this first approximation to an overview may prove worthwhile.

I take my text from the eighteenth-century poet Thomas Campbell, who won his niche in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations with the line, "coming events cast their shadows before." That may not always be true of horse races, earthquakes, and the stock market, but it is usually true of wars, at least major ones. And of all American wars, the Civil War cast the longest shadow in advance, far longer than most of us realize. How did the foreshadowing affect the ultimate event? In all our decisions, including those that set the course of history, we act not only on our perceptions of the past but also on our expectations of the future. In the case of the Civil War, what were those expectations? What ^{aroused} ~~raised~~ them, and when, and why? How did they affect choices? Were they used to serve conscious ends? If so, what ends, and how? Could they also have

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